The Black Cat

AUGUST 1906

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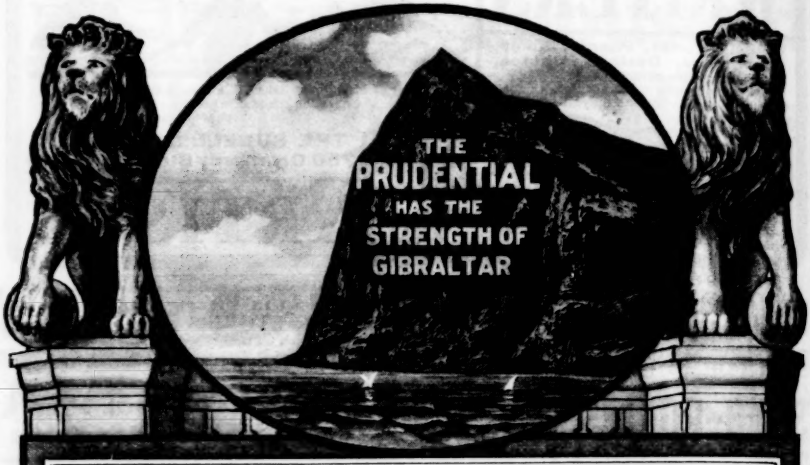

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A Vigil Under Scorpio.*

BY CHARLES LEONARD MOORE.

TWO river steamers drew at once into the harbor of Manaos; one from the upper Madeira — the foot hills of the Andes, — the other from Para and the Atlantic coast. On the deck of the first there were but few passengers, traders, dealers in rubber for the most part, and one young caballero, Don Pastor Ayola. He was following the path of many other impoverished Bolivians and prospecting for a new rubber field on the Amazon waters. The other boat was crowded with white-robed or sheepskin-clad folk, who clustered about the decks like a swarm of gray ants. They were people whom the Government was deporting from the famine-stricken coast province of Ceara, to scatter among the river towns. Their faces and limbs were gaunt with hunger, and they sat or lay about in listless attitudes, like growths of nature, moss-lichened boughs or rocks.

In the midst of this almost lifeless mass of exiles, Ayola caught sight of a single figure standing erect and a little apart, like a flowering bush above a stagnant pond. It was that of a young girl. Her single robe hardly disguised the planes and outlines of her body; its rags slipped from her firm breasts and disclosed the long

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curves of her limbs, still hard and full in spite of famine. Her figure, thus frankly yielded to the eye, had less of marble in its color than ivory. Her hair, brown and abundant, fell in masses below her waist; its weight, perhaps, helping to keep her small head so erect and her eyelids wide.

As Ayola looked at her their eyes met. Something seemed to leap between them. A touch of color ran through the girl's ivory pallor, her bosom heaved, she leaned forward. As for Ayola, he stood flushed, but motionless — a feeling block. In a moment the steamers had passed each other and the man and girl were swept from each other's vision.

The anchorages of the boats were half a mile apart, and by the time the formalities of arrival were satisfied and Ayola had landed and engaged a canoe to take him to the other steamer, it had disembarked a good part of its passengers, and they were scattered along the river or in the town. He could find no trace of the girl he sought, but one of the officers of the steamer recognized her description and volunteered the information that she was a proud piece, and as cold as her name, Januaria.

During intervals of business during the next few days, Ayola kept up his search, but without success. Finally, hearing of an encampment of the Cearenses on a small tributary of the Rio Negro, a few miles above the town, he took a canoe to find it. As he pushed up the stream the whole surface of the water was deep with debris — rolling tree trunks, masses of foliage, red and gray and yellow, — through which, as through an Autumn-carpeted ravine, he plowed his way. Higher up, the stream grew clear, but was confused with islands, some of solid earth, others merely a floating tree to which grass and bushes had adhered, masking the trunk itself. The canoe path then grew tortuous and difficult, branches and vines overhead turning it into a caverned thoroughfare. Wood-walled, shut out from the sky, with branching vistas on either side reiterated in the waves below, the place had depths and distances and multiplied visions of its own that seemed in accord with no law of perspective. It was like a hall of echoing mirrors. The upper growths, reflected in the water, gave to it the faint motion of the air and received from it the faint ripple of the wave. A few vivid touches of flowering plants, the yellow of some

lofty tree, the bright green of sward and foliage and the hoary hues of the enormous, water-circled trees, embedded in and emerging from themselves, lit up the under spaces, while a vaguely diffused sunlight fluctuated in the recesses of the woods above. Finally, as the canoe still advanced, the walls of foliage fell back from the stream, leaving easy pastoral banks, and, beyond, the white, foaming slope of a little cataract.

Here were the Baths of Manoas, and, whether attracted by the abstract idea of cleanliness, or by the gayety of the game, a good many of the youth of that place, of both sexes, were playing in the rushing water. They sprawled, swam, dived, wrestled, flung each other into the deep places, or writhed up the rocks to renew the strife. It was a joyous and animating spectacle. The girls were of all hues, from a white as pure as the foam, to a darkness as deep as that of the water in its hollow pools. They were uniformly clad in a single garment, which, wet and clinging, revealed their sculpturesque figures as though they were undraped. The men had on thin trousers, but their bronze bodies flashed in the sunlight.

Two of the Naiads swam out to the canoe, threatening to upset it; but Ayola drove them away with his paddle and sent the boat on to a little shelving beach. For he had caught sight of the object of his search. On a jut of rock overlooking the watery revel stood Januaria. She was dressed no better than when Don Pastor had first seen her, but something in her mien kept the riotous bathers at bay. She gazed on them, interested but aloof, and they respected her isolation.

Ayola sprang up the bank and stood before her. A flood of color surged into her face, and her eyes, which had looked forth so calmly a moment before, drooped before his. He took her hand. She did not resist. It was a courtship without words. He claimed her with a fiery glance, and she bowed her head and submitted. He led her down into his boat, and she entered it unresistingly. There was no one to consult, no permission to be asked. Poor child, her fate it was to be flung from famine to servitude. The face of her new friend was a torch, lighting her to paradise.

And a paradise it was that they came to inherit for a brief while. Among the virgin woods of the Madeira, scores of leagues from human habitation, Don Pastor set up his abode. Two Boli-

vian Indians, whom he had brought with him, erected a palm-thatched casa, a mere sketch of a house, but sufficient for their needs. Them he had then dispatched to Bolivia to bring back a number of their fellows, whose services he could command. For, on the low-lying, marshy ground beyond their clearing, were rubber trees in unusual quantity and Ayola knew he had a fortune in hand. During the absence of his peons he and Januaria settled down to fleet the time away with hunting, fishing, and a love-making almost as simple and incessant as that of the parroquets and love birds about them.

But no stranger can brave the Amazonian woods with impunity. The sun god, here almost visible in his chariot of fire, demands a tribute. The air, prismatic, iridescent, filled, as it were, with broken rainbows, enervates; the sudden coolness of the night chills, and the enfolding forest — damp, obscure, over-luxuriant — breeds fevers that seize man in a hundred forms. Fresh from the clear air of his Bolivian highlands, Don Pastor soon felt the malady of the place. He fought against it — fought it down — but suddenly it returned upon him, and with one convulsive effort stretched him rigid on the floor of his hut — cold, pulseless, apparently dead.

Januaria knelt beside him, calling his name in every accent of love, alarm, despair. She chafed his limbs, she bathed his face, she used all the means known to her simple experience to re-warm and re-invigorate her lover's frame. She did not think of death, or put the thought from her as something impossible. No! He was sick, he was in a faint; he needed help — help that she could not supply. She was alone in the forest. Where could she get assistance which would revive her fallen god? She could not leave him. The wild beasts, or even deadlier reptiles and insects, would make short work of him. All day long and far into the night she labored over him, but in vain. His unclosed eyes stared up with a stiffened look of agony, but other indication of life there was none. Then she came to a decision. She must take him to where wise people lived who knew how to deal with such sickness. She remembered the kindly faces at a Jesuit Mission which they had passed on their voyage up the Madeira. There they would know what to do to make her darling well. How far it was she had no idea. Many days had elapsed after passing it before they had come to

this, their home. But the river flowed down, and it would take her with it.

As soon as the sun rose she made her preparations for departure. Her slender form was instinct with strength — yet it was by almost an inspired effort that she succeeded in half carrying, half dragging Don Pastor to the river bank and placing him in their canoe. Then she hastily returned to the house to equip herself for the journey. She took Don Pastor's heavy revolver, which he had taught her to use, an armful of bright colored shawls, a bowl of farinha and a gourd for drinking. Arrived again at the canoe she disposed Don Pastor's body comfortably, pillowing it in shawls, and making of one of these a little awning to shield his face from the sun. Then she knelt in the bow of the canoe and with a whirl of her paddle drove it out into the stream.

She did not exhaust her strength with much paddling. The current ran at the rate of three miles an hour, and it was only necessary to keep in it. Downward the canoe floated on the noble river, through long reaches, walled with high banks and mighty woods, like a watery avenue of some great park; through lake-like expanses where exit and entrance seemed closed; around banks that circled upon themselves. She did not stop even in the heat of the day, for there was a coolness on the water which kept up her strength. Only when night fell she drew in to the overroofing bank and anchored, for fear she would pass the Mission village in the dark. For a while her purpose and the nocturnal noises kept her awake. Now and then there would come to her ears the plash of some tapir taking the water, or of some alligator drawing himself up on the beach, the soft pad of a jaguar upon the bank, or the crackling of a herd of peccaries in the underbrush. But soon drowsiness overcame her, and she stretched herself beside her lover's body and slept.

Again when the day come she pursued her voyage. Between those unfathomable forests, untenanted by man, she floated on. It was not until late in the afternoon that she came in sight of human habitations. Her face lighted up. Her eyes of dog-like fidelity, her mouth of mute faith, smiled. "Now, my darling, you will wake," she murmured. "Wicked one to frighten me so. I will pay you for it. You shall see."

The settlement was on the right bank of the river, and the sinking sun flashed back from the stained adobe walls and tiled roofs of a cluster of high perched houses, and from a gilt crucifix which surmounted them. The grassy bank was notched into irregular steps that ascended almost to the door of the chapel, above which glittered the cross. An Indian woman was beating clothes on a flat rock by the river's edge. She looked up at Januaria and her freighted vessel as if such appearances were more monotonous than flies. Januaria sprang out of the canoe and approached her.

"Help me, Senhorita; help me, angel of mercy. See, I kneel!"

The vacant face of the woman was as beautiful to the girl in her desolation as the Virgin's countenance to a dreaming novice.

"What place is this?" she continued.

"The Mission of San Francisco," answered the other, more impressed by the newcomer's dress and ornaments than by the genius of sorrow in her face.

"Ah, what good fortune. Hasten, please! Go to your Padre and bid him come to me."

With many a backward look the woman climbed the stairs, while Januaria sank down by the canoe to watch her precious cargo.

The Mission grounds wore an air of neglected prosperity. They showed a comfortable decay that evinced ease and abundance. The chapel's front had once been sheathed with blue and white tiles, but these had mostly fallen away, exposing the yellow walls. Even the glory of the Saint whose image, from an alcove above the door, guarded the place, was somewhat impaired. He had parted with many of his fingers and toes, and other outlying portions of his frame, and he sadly needed re-gilding, but there was no mistaking his office and dignity. Beyond the chapel was a long, two-storied casa, encircled by a porch in whose cool shadow swung several parti-colored hammocks. An open lawn, rolling and scattered over with graceful palms and drooping banana plants, extended back to the roots of the forest trees.

There was little stir of life about the place. Now and then an Indian, white-stoled and stately, moved across the lawn, and a group of naked children were playing in a corner of the porch. But the whole estate seemed sacred to birds. The scavenger vulture of the Amazon, uncouth and black, dried his wings on the

house-top. Macaws, like animated palettes, slept on the porch rail or waked to utter discordant, ominous cries. White cranes stalked in stiff parade before the casa, and the air was so full of smaller birds, — green and red and yellow — that one might fancy the rays of the sunlight had decomposed themselves into their primitive colors and become birds.

In Padre Pacifico the joyous serenity of the place found its last expression. He sat in a cane chair placed in the wide, cool hall of the casa, and as the Indian woman came to him, unhurried by her news, he looked placidly up, keeping, the while, his pencil on the tablet in his lap. His face was something better than sunshine; his figure large, satisfying, was clad and girdled about in a white robe. The woman delivered her errand.

"Dead, you say, Juana. Then there cannot be any hurry. The dead have all time for their convenience. Go, bring the girl here."

Juana swept away and the Padre soliloquized.

"Where was I? Ha! She has made me lose my train of thought. I was just about to create a good phrase. Well, 'tis my fate. Why should I be at the pains of composing beautiful sermons, anyhow? There is nobody here to admire them and Cyprian chides me for my pains of prosody. 'Tis the way of the world. The moment a man is found who knows how to do anything, he is set at another task. I, who ought to be preaching in the cathedral at Para, am sent to teach Indian brats in the wilderness."

The woman reappeared in the doorway.

"Senhor, the girl will not leave the body. She cries for help and says he is asleep."

"No? Then I will go and reason with her."

As he arrived at the landing Januaria arose and confronted him.

"Padre! Art thou the Padre?" she cried.

"I am, my child. One of the two who guard this Mission — this fortress of virtue in a frail land."

"Help and medicine, Senhor, for this boy! He sleeps. Three days he has been thus. My own heart is frozen that it cannot warm his."

The Padre bent over and examined Don Pastor. He felt his wrist and heart.

"Alas, Senhorita, I pity you. It is sad."

"But you have medicines, Senhor, you can wake him?" and she clutched the Padre's arm in her eagerness.

"Be calm, my child. He shall have care." Then turning to the crowding but incurious group of Indians who had gathered about, he gave orders to bear the body into the chapel.

"Felipe," he said, "Go you to the pantry and bring eight large candles. Juana, do you take the man's measure. You shall be satisfied, Senhorita."

"Ah, Senhor, you are good."

"It is well, my child. You could not have brought your charge to a better place. We will do him honor. I will compose a sermon for him such as you never dreamed of. Come, Hombres!"

At the door of the chapel another Padre appeared, and at sight of him the girl sank back into Pacifico's benignant shadow. For Cyprian loomed up like a rock beaten by waves — a thing to shun or cling to, as safety or wreck dictated. He was tall and thin, and built in the manner of Mercator's projection, wide at the top. His legs began under his chin. The hollows of his face were full of darkness, even in the sun's fullest blare.

The two Padres whispered together, and gazed upon the body. Then Pacifico turned gently to Januaria:

"Come, Senhorita, and be our guest. You need refreshment."

"But, Senhor, you do nothing for him. Save him! Help me!"

"To-morrow, my child. Come now within."

"No! No! Senhor. I stay by him until he wakes!"

Seeing that it was useless to urge her, Pacifico gave directions to the attendants, who placed Don Pastor on a trestled bier, and, lighting the candles, set them at his head and feet. Januaria was awed by this proceeding, which seemed to her possibly some rite of restoration, and, kneeling by the side of the bier, suffered the Padres to leave her alone.

The next morning the Mission turned grave-digger. All day long the male population of the place loitered, singly or in groups, over to a jutting bank, where, amid heavily-leaved banana plants, a few mounds broke the level ground. By turns each Indian took a hand in the construction of Don Pastor's last house. The task was a laborious one, owing to the nature of the soil, baked by the sun for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, but it was

performed with a contempt for time admirably suited to the business. The shadows were falling long on the sward as the work was finished, and the Mission bell began to toll.

Red and yellow and white was the funeral cortege that, a few moments later, issued from the chapel. The men had donned their newest shirts, the women their stiffest camisas. Don Pastor's body was borne on the litter by four deep-chested Indians. By its side walked Januaria, restless, glittering-eyed. Perhaps, unused to burial pomp, she deemed this procession some new ceremony that would unclose her lover's eyes. Padre Pacifico marched ahead, and after them all, clothed in black, like a crow stalking down a furrow, came Padre Cyprian.

As they went, Pacifico opened his book and began to arrange the sentences of his funeral oration in his mind. But when they came in sight of the fresh-turned earth, the gaping grave, Januaria gave a start and threw herself before the procession, arms outstretched.

"Hold, Senhor!" she cried.

"How, girl! What is the matter?"

"Back, Senhor! Back, hombres! I command here. This boy is mine. You shall not touch him. Do you think I brought him to you to be hid away in the earth?"

"But you are mad, Senhorita! He is dead!"

"Dead! He is not dead! You are old and blind. My eyes are clearer, my senses keener than yours. I can see the blood moving in his veins. I can hear his heart beat. No, no, Senhor, he sleeps!"

"Alas, my child, would it were so! But I have had long experience. I know the laws of medicine. He is dead!"

"Medicine! I came to you for medicine, and you give me a grave! Give him to me. I will take him back to the wilderness. I will nurse him to life. You shall not have him! You shall not!"

And Januaria flung herself upon her lover and locked her arms about his body and lay almost as rigid as the boy himself. And now Cyprian came forward.

"Pacifico, be wise," he said. "There may be instinct in this matter. Allow the girl her way and put off the burial.'

"And you, too, Cyprian? Is the world mad? Do I know nothing of such matters? Why, in your ear, Cyprian, the man

smells. By to-morrow he will be as black as your robe. We shall have him breeding a plague. No, no! It grows late, and we must finish the business. Senhorita, get up, I beseech you."

"Well, Pacifico, you will either have to bury her alive, or kill her to separate them."

"May the Saints pardon her, yes. She has fainted, but her arms are like marble about him."

"Do not disturb her; I forbid you to go further in this."

"But, Cyprian, we cannot leave them here in the open. The tigers would save us the expense of a headstone. And together they are too heavy to carry back."

"Do you return to the Mission, Pacifico, with the crowd, and I will watch here through the night."

Persuaded, though unsatisfied, Pacifico turned away with his train and pomp of funeral. Swift night had fallen, and the earth was filled with gloom. Above, the stars grew momently in mellow glow. Venus arose, like a young moon, casting reflections on the sward. The Southern Cross just brushed the tops of the trees at the edge of the glade. And overhead hung the vast constellation of Scorpio, so vivid against the black night, so distinct and vital in its curved outline, that one could understand the instinct that gave it an embodiment.

A tremor ran through Januaria, and she sat up. The glade was lonely, save for the tall figure of Cyprian, a little apart from her. The girl recognized a reprieve and with a faint murmur of satisfaction again buried her face on her lover's breast.

For some time Padre Cyprian stood there, silent, a statued shadow. He flung back his hood and gazed up at the constellations and captains of the air. Still in contemplation, he moved away to where an opening in the tree-curtained bank revealed the river, now a muffled mass of shade. Here he halted and took from some pocket of his garment a curious instrument. It was a whip with many thongs, each of which was set at the end with barbs of the black palm, keen and poisonous. Then, throwing back his robe, he bared his body, dark and sinewy, to the waist. Then there arose from the border of that wood a faint noise — the switch of those thongs through the air, the laceration of flesh, the involuntary murmurs of pain. Padre Cyprian did penance.

By and by, Januaria rose to her feet and looked about her. The earth was tangled in shadow. The stars, so splendid above, lent but little light to that tree-encircled glade. She heard the metallic tinkle of the anvil bird in the forest. She heard the soothing flutter of the vampire bats awing. She heard the lapping of the waves upon the beach. Soon, to her strained senses, there came another sound, a soft pad upon the sward. It went and came, or ceased, as though some animal was sentinelling the glade or crouching to watch its prey. The girl shaded her eyes and peered more intently into the dark. It seemed to her she could make out some great bulk, duskier than the night, pacing up and down before her in the open glade. Just then it wheeled, and she saw two balls of yellow fire, and knew that a jaguar was confronting her. Her hand glided to her girdle, and she drew forth her revolver, and, as the beast took up again its tethered tread, she fired.

A fearful scream rang out upon the air and the wounded beast rebounded and crouched again for the attack. Cyprian shouted from the bank, and ran to the girl's assistance. But help was nearer at hand. For hours Don Pastor had been struggling out of his trance into consciousness. Dimly he had been aware of his surroundings and of the plight he was in. But the iron oppression which held him resisted all the efforts of his will to throw it off. Now, however, the pistol shot, the scream, the realization of Januaria's need, broke the spell. He bounded to his feet, and, as he did so, caught in his arms the falling girl. Instinctively, his hand clutched the revolver, and, as he saw before him in the dark those glowing coals of fire, he aimed between them. The report rang out again, an awful scream thrilled the vale, and with one convulsive bound, the great cat rolled dead at their feet.

The next day was a notable one in the annals of the Mission. It was marked by the marriage of Don Pastor Ayola and Januaria. The girl insisted on Cyprian performing the ceremony, and Padre Pacifico was left to lament the loss of two opportunities in twenty-four hours — a funeral oration and a wedding speech.

long the male population of the place loitered, [illegible] over to a jutting bank, where, amid heavily-leaved banana plants, a few mounds broke the level ground. By turns each Indian took a hand in the construction of Don Pastor's last house. The task was a laborious one, owing to the nature of the soil, baked by the sun for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, but it was

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The Essence of Advertisement.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

THE proprietor and the general manager of Copeland's Dry Goods Emporium were in consultation. There was a third party to the consultation, a dapper little bald-headed gentleman who, an hour before, had introduced himself as E. Dodge, the inventor of a new perfume called The Essence of Advertisement, which article he sought to introduce into a few select stores in San Francisco.

The proprietor and the general manager had heard the little inventor out without showing him out. Indeed, they had listened with growing interest to his dissertation on the value of The Essence of Advertisement, and had agreed to order a heavy consignment of the perfume, should the sample prove a complete success.

The little inventor-demonstrator was all confidence. Uncorking a quart bottle of the Essence, he went through the store and sprinkled the counters with a slight quantity of the stuff. He also dashed some upon the threshold of the emporium doors and against the large plate-glass windows without, as well as on the sidewalk itself, for, strange to say, the Essence was not to be sold over the counter but was to be sprinkled about the bazaar.

The fluid was as colorless as water, yet as fragrant as white violets, and soon the emporium was pervaded with its delicious, penetrating odor.

"You see, gentlemen," explained the little demonstrator, "all matter is spirit and all spirit is matter. Or, in other words, all things both physical and spiritual are one in their final element, and matter can be changed into spirit and spirit into matter. This Essence of Advertisement is materialized thought. By a certain secret process I collect the advertising thought of a number of

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men of advertising genius and force these thoughts into the perfume of violets, somewhat as gases are charged into natural mineral waters, and a breath of this prepared perfume, when drawn into the lungs, acts precisely the same upon the person inhaling it as a column of choice advertisements would act upon that person. Thus, by sprinkling the Essence upon the counters and before the doors of the bazaar, every man and woman who comes within inhaling distance of the perfume is strongly inclined to purchase — and purchase heavily — those goods which you have on sale, exactly as one would be moved to purchase those goods immediately upon reading some masterly written advertisement. By evening your sales will attest in fat figures the perfect truth of my assertions."

The proprietor drew a deep breath of the delicious violet fragrance, and patting the little inventor on the back, beamed graciously.

"We shall see," he said. "We shall see."

The cashier was perhaps the first that day to be aware of a sudden and excessive increase of trade at Copeland's Dry Goods Emporium. Money poured into his office, not by the dimes and dollars but by fives and twenties — a stream of gold — for in California coin, not paper, is still the everyday currency — ran towards the rear of the bazaar along the "change" wire, and returned a stream of silver. The counters were crowded with buyers, though no special bargains were on sale, and it seemed that every one who passed before the great show-windows of the store stopped to admire, then hurried in to buy.

Soon the tills were emptied of silver change, and the manager was called up and notified to that effect. He immediately reported to the proprietor the happy state of affairs.

Beaming like a sunbeam in clover and dew, the proprietor received the news, rubbed his hands, patted the manager on the shoulder, and without a word of notice increased that gentleman's salary a hundred dollars a month.

"It was The Essence of Advertisement that did the trick!" the manager felicitated himself. "What a lucky stroke it was that I listened to the little inventor and didn't turn him away, as I was about to do."

The clerk sent out for that purpose brought in two large sacks of silver change, yet the cashier's office barely got through the day without sending for more silver, so heavy were the afternoon's sales.

"Oh, what a delicious fragrance of violet!" exclaimed a certain lady patron, typical of all the bazaar's patrons, and turning to the solicitous salesman she ordered a dozen silk shirt waists, whereas she had visited the store intending to purchase but one. "What a perfectly exquisite fragrance! It reminds me of when I was a happy, care-free little girl!"

The next morning, when the inventor called to learn what success had attended his Essence, he was met with wide-open arms. Policy would have cautioned the proprietor and the general manager to have received the little gentleman but lukewarmly, that they might beat down the cost of the perfume — which was one hundred dollars a quart — or forestall the price being advanced. But the stuff had proved such a brilliant success that these two gentlemen cast all policy to the wind, and when E. Dodge finally took his leave he had booked an order for five thousand dollars worth of the Essence, with the one condition that for six months he should not sell any of the precious fluid to any other dry-goods store in San Francisco.

As the inventor had guaranteed, The Essence of Advertisement proved a success; a success so astonishing that within a week, and notwithstanding the fact that Copeland withdrew all of his customary heavy advertisements from the papers, he was forced to engage four additional buyers to keep his stock replenished, and he and his general manager felicitated themselves on having fallen into a bed of clover.

But suddenly they found burrs in the clover. While thousands daily visited the bazaar and purchased heavily, the astounding fact was soon discovered that once having bought from the counters of the emporium the patron rarely returned.

Could it be that the Essence, while crowding the store with transient custom, was driving away all steady patronage?

A letter was hastily written to E. Dodge, laying the facts before him and asking for advice. Two weeks later the advice came. It was as follows:

MARTIN COPELAND,
Proprietor Copeland's Dry Goods Emporium:

Dear Sir,—The reason why patrons, once having purchased at your store, rarely return, is to be explained by the fact that you are using the Essence of Advertisement in too pure a state. I send you herewith a recipe for its dilution; have a druggist attend to the matter at once. There is such a thing as over-advertising. When your customers breathe the Essence in too pure a state, they are incited to buy more goods than they can use, and as soon as they quit the bazaar and come from under the spell of the perfume they repent their heavy purchases, and, out of chagrin, do not return. The remedy is to dilute the Essence according to the recipe enclosed, and while your sales will fall off somewhat, they will show a much healthier state.

Very truly,
E. DODGE.

On receipt of this letter of advice, the general manager immediately sent out a clerk with a quart of The Essence of Advertisement, instructing him to have the stuff diluted according to directions at the nearest druggist. Slipping on an orange peel before a rival store, the clerk spilt the vial, and the contents ran over the sidewalk. Immediately all the passers-by in that neighborhood began to pour into the rival store, and the unprecedented sales of that house, while the odor of the perfume lasted, astounded and mystified the proprietor.

This unfortunate clerk was immediately discharged, and another was sent out with a second bottle of the Essence. He proved more fortunate, or less careless, and thereafter the diluted perfume only was used at Copeland's, and though sales were not as heavy as formerly, they showed a far healthier state, customers not failing to return to the bazaar when in need of new goods.

Copeland's Dry Goods Emporium now became enviously noted for the amazing amount of steady business that it was doing, and for the exquisite violet fragrance that haunted its shelves and counters, and other stores, hoping thereby to attract custom, began to imitate the latter novelty. But the fragrance they used was merely the ordinary violet perfume of commerce and not the marvelous Essence of Advertisement, and of course these imitators had their cost and labor for nothing.

Six months passed, and his stock of Essence growing alarmingly low, Copeland wrote to the headquarters of E. Dodge in New York City for a ten thousand dollar consignment of the precious fluid. Within three weeks his order returned, the envelope thereof bearing the official stamp, Party Dead.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the alarmed proprietor, "Dodge is dead, and perhaps his secret has died with him!"

And so it proved. The little inventor had sunk into an untimely grave, taking with him a jewel brighter than The Star of India, for in his death was lost the secret of that marvelous compound, The Essence of Advertisement.

Among the scanty effects left by the deceased was a yellow, ragged slip of paper, bearing the following memorandum:

> Hemp-seed — makes men dream dreams. Opium — ditto. Absinthe — certain (different) effects. There ought to be — may be — plant — mineral — somewhere (try India) which — eaten — tasted — smelt — will incite men — women — to spend money — lavishly — heedlessly. If can find this plant — mineral — can mix with rose — violet — perfume — sprinkle in stores — patrons smell — buy heavily — freely — advertisement.

Here the writing ended, torn away. Copeland reflected. Was The Essence of Advertisement the materialized thoughts of men of advertising genius, or something quite different, and though less wonderful and mysterious, not less effective and valuable?

The Chrysalis of Caroline.*

BY CATHERINE CARR.

CAROLINE MACLAIN slowly climbed the mountain path, her shoulders listless, her eyes languid. She was going to Red Rock because Cousin Kate had said she should, the view from there being the pride of the county, and Caroline was accustomed to having others make decisions for her.

Orphaned at eight, she had grown up under the kindly but absolute rule of her two half-sisters, who were much older, and women of marked executive ability. They reared the girl after the approved New England method, she being thoroughly instructed in needlework and housekeeping, somewhat in music and carefully selected literature, and largely in the virtues of obedience and silence. Young people spoke only when spoken to, in the code of the capable Sarah and Adelaide, and distinctly, they did as they were bid.

Caroline achieved skill in these accomplishments rather passively than enthusiastically, and to question any of her sisters' rulings never occurred to her, though she did indeed make timid request for pink ribbon on her graduating dress instead of the light blue of Adelaide's choice, intuition telling her, no doubt, since becomingness was never a quality discussed in reference to her wardrobe, of how suited pink was to shell-pink cheeks, shy hazel eyes, and soft ripples of wavy, light-brown hair.

Sister Adelaide, however, was adverse to the encouragement of vanity — Caroline had presented the naïve argument that it would look nice on her — and said with chill conclusion that there was nothing so refined and modest for a young girl as light blue.

Inferentially convicted of immodesty, Caroline, of course, could

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say nothing more, but when alone before her small mirror she held a pink rose under her chin and approved the effect.

"It *does* look nice," she murmured. "I wonder if Sister Adelaide thinks that it is immodest for flowers to be pink?"

Which marked her nearest approach to rebellion, until Sarah told her that Anson MacLain had asked for her to marry him. Caroline's negative then was decisive and also a little incredulous, for Anson MacLain had been a friend of her father, and his calls had seemed solely upon business affairs — certainly there had been nothing of sentiment in the brief sentences he had addressed to her, Caroline's limited knowledge judged.

"No, no. Why, Sarah," she expostulated, "he's old and I couldn't — He — he had much better take you."

It was very likely that Sarah secretly entertained a similar idea herself, but her Puritan conscience held her firm to what she conceived to be her duty to her young sister, whose portion would be small.

"Nonsense, Mr. MacLain knows that nothing could change *my* mind on that point, and it's a fine chance for you. May I ask if there is anyone else you prefer?" she questioned, with alarming formality.

This approached sarcasm, for Caroline had no acquaintance that was not approved by her sisters, and it was not for a member of the M. E. Sewing Society to be ignorant of who walked home with who from evening service. Sarah could not but know that Caroline had never been so favored, a delicate, impalpable detachment holding her apart from her companions. She fluttered vaguely now, under scarlet blushes.

"Of course not," she faltered, "I only thought — that is, it has always seemed as if — if I ever *should* — he should be younger, and be straight and tall, and not have rheumatism nor talk with a bur-r," she added, unconsciously baring her maiden sanctuary to her sister's unsympathetic gaze.

"Mercy!" that lady exclaimed, "I'm surprised at you, Caroline. No nice girl ever thinks of such things before she has been asked. When we've tried to raise you so carefully, too, I can't understand it. So unmaidenly — indelicate," she murmured in shocked accents.

So Caroline, again convicted of undesirable qualities, shamed of her rose-pink dreams as she had been shamed of her desire for the rose-pink ribbon, confused, helpless, was married to a man nearly thrice her twenty untried years, going in truth from one guardianship to another, Anson MacLain being notably "set" in his ways. Yet when, some ten years later, her husband died, Caroline, her physical strength worn with long nursing, sank into a nerveless inertia that alarmed Sarah and Adelaide, who were prompt to resume their sway.

Rest and change being variously advised, it was at last decided that Caroline should go to New Mexico and visit Cousin Kate Lane, whose husband owned a ranch there, and Caroline went without protest, but equally without desire. She was seemingly incapable of either, and the free twang of the clear air failing in infection, Cousin Kate wrote home with somewhat of apprehension.

"It isn't that she is really sick, but as if she wasn't alive, somehow. It seems wonderful that she should have cared so much for her husband when he was so much older, but I suppose that is the trouble, though she never mentions his name unless someone introduces the subject."

It was at this hour that Caroline sat leaning against a huge boulder, her eyes wandering over the sweeps of sun-steeped plain, admitting their beauty, yet alien to their charm. The vastness of height and blue distance oppressed with a sense of isolation her spirit, accustomed to the minute detail of village street and environment. Caroline, you would have said, did not possess the quality of ready adjustment.

She had sat there long, when suddenly the intense silence was crashed like a thinly-blown glass bubble by a pistol shot, and she sprang up in a panic of fright, her eyes wildly searching the rocks. Explanation was offered by the writhing length of a large rattlesnake, with its head shot away, that almost lashed her feet, and the immediate appearance of a man with a smoking pistol in his hand.

He was a man of the mountains, clearly, roughly clad, and with a small arsenal hanging from his belt, but he was a man to be noticed in any place. His dark eyes were masterful in large

sockets, and his high, hawk-like nose spoke of force for large achievement, whatever the cost. A man from whom Caroline, wrapt in her New England prejudices, would ordinarily have shrunk, but now she reached her hands out to him, partly in gratitude, and partly in appeal for further support, for her every nerve was quivering; but though the man's eyes softened and were charged with sympathy, he did not take her hands. He seemed almost to hold aloof while he spoke reassuringly, and his voice was in odd contradiction of his appearance, being distinctly that of refinement.

"There, there," he said, soothingly, "It's all over. He's done for now. It's all right — Good Lord" — in sudden alarm — "she's going to faint."

Caroline was, indeed, swaying helplessly, and, after an appealing glance about him, the man caught her in his arms. He eased her gently to the ground, resting her head on his arm and fanning her with his hat.

"I can't help it. Surely she'll understand that I can't help it," he muttered, his eyes very wistful on her delicate face and long lashes.

She opened her eyes, to meet this strange expression, and to blush vividly from chin to the roots of her loosened hair, and the man, obviously distressed by her embarrassment, helped her to a seat on a near-by rock.

"I hope you will pardon me," he said, "but really, there seemed nothing else to do."

Caroline's eyes widened with wonder.

"What is there to pardon? You have saved my life. Had I been bitten in this lonely place, I should have died before relief could have reached me. I don't know how to thank you."

She again advanced her hand, but the man again drew back.

"Don't," he said, almost harshly, "I don't want you to say or do anything that you will regret when you know who and what I am."

Caroline's face paled, but she was firm.

"Who or whatever you are does not alter my debt to you," she said, and she looked at him steadily as in all her life she had never looked at a man, and what she saw beneath his rough ex-

terior seemed to bring conviction. "I don't believe you are so *very* bad. You don't look it, some way."

The man shook his head, a grave smile touching his eyes.

"I doubt if you know what a really bad man is. I know you don't. I've been watching you for an hour. Oh, that demands an apology, I know," as Caroline flushed again, "but if you could understand what it meant to me to see a woman like you! It was like finding a violet in the desert, only — only it was not for me to touch — and you speak of debt — do you know what you saved me from? Listen! Not an hour ago I lay behind those rocks waiting for the Las Cruces stage, which I meant to hold up. It passed while I was shooting that snake."

"You — you were going to — rob the stage — " Caroline gasped, her eyes dilated with horror, and she shrank involuntarily.

"Yes. You're glad now that you haven't touched my hand, aren't you?" he said bitterly. "Well, I have it to my credit that I didn't let you, and you're just, I can see that. When a bullet ends it all for me, you'll say, 'He was honest, at least. He cried 'Unclean.'"

"A great deal more than that," Caroline said, earnestly, "That you did not leave a woman in danger, and," studying his face, "that you were not deliberately wicked. That somehow misfortune had been too strong for you."

"The cry of the weakling," the man said, "and, yes, that's what I am. Had I been stronger I should have conquered, but — there seemed no use. I wonder if you would care to know about it. I should like for you to know — because, because had we met in the old days I believe we should have been friends."

"I should appreciate your confidence," she said gently. "And won't you sit down?" motioning to an adjacent rock.

"How strange," he said, "You speak as to a guest. I can almost see the tea-kettle."

"To more," Caroline replied, "To my rescuer."

"I think I'd rather be the other," the man mused. "It would be more like meeting you on an equal plane, but then no man could do that."

He chose a place on the ground where he could see into her eyes, and was silent for a few moments.

"It is a common enough story," he said at last. "It happens to many men, but they don't all fail as I did. I was a Junior at college when my guardian absconded and left me practically penniless, and I don't suppose anyone could have been more unfitted to face poverty. I simply had no idea of the value of money."

"Poor boy," Caroline murmured, the maternal sense stirring for the unfortunate boy who had had dark eyes and a clean, aquiline profile.

"I don't mean that as an excuse. It isn't, but I tried — at least I tried. I came West, to Idaho, and worked on a sheep ranch owned by an old friend of my father, and there's no work that gnaws the life out of one like that — living with the imbecile, blatting bunches of wool. Cattle's different. They seem to have sense, somehow, and you don't work alone as with sheep, but I held on, and for two years I worked. God," setting his teeth hard, "*How* I worked! There — there was a girl, you know. We had been engaged before, when I was labelled, 'a good catch,' and she promised to stand by me and to wait. I lived on her letters. Just that, I was a fool in those days."

Caroline divined through his beard that the lines of his mouth were bitter.

"But she grew tired of waiting," he went on, "Perhaps she wasn't so much to be blamed. I hadn't much to offer, but the blow came from a clear sky. She gave no hint of her intention in a letter written a week before her wedding to a rich man. I suppose she was afraid that I should come on and make trouble, and I probably should, for I was desperate. Well, I cut loose then. I had no near relatives, and there was no one to hold me. In two months I had spent all I had saved, and after that I drifted — down. It's mighty easy when you get started."

"I understand," Caroline said, with a little catch in her throat.

Caroline said this, Caroline whose white, sheltered life knew nothing of temptation, of sin's dark places nor its unholy glitter. And Caroline was not of ready adjustment. Clearly some magic was at work.

"I don't think you can, quite," he said, "but it is, and I went the pace. I've been bar-tender, faro-dealer and gambler, and my

father was a Senator, but I had sufficient regard for his memory to protect his name with an assumed one. No one has known that it was Rodman Page who served drinks and dealt the cards, and I put up a straight game of its kind, until this deal. I'd been playing in hard luck and planned the hold-up to set me on my feet. You can't know what it means when no one cares, but I saw you while I lay over there among the rocks, and I knew if she had been like you it would have all been different. She was beautiful too — as a glowing rose is beautiful, and with the rose's thorns. And after awhile I knew that if — forgive me, it cannot harm you and the thought is much to me — I knew that if it could only have been *you* — it would have been — the perfection of life."

He drew his breath long and looked away from her, as one seeking wisdom in looking away from the unattainable.

Caroline's own breath came gasping out of tumultuous emotions. It was as if something within her, with strong and vivid wings, beat against the confines wound by her gray life and teachings — a something that struggled toward the wonder of her being of help to anyone, the strength for higher things — she, whose will had ever been pliant, whose weakness had been tacitly accepted by all, whose husband had given her no pulse of companionship and no pedestal! That *her* hand, weak and constantly guided, could lead, support, was a marvel of beauty when the man's voice was soft and his eyes held potential tenderness. Suddenly she knew the needs of women — their strange desires to give, to serve, to exact and to hold, and suddenly her newly-found wings were carrying her far. Further, perhaps, than wings that had spent a portion of their strength in trivial flutterings.

"Perhaps it isn't too late yet," she faltered, "I — I wish you would try again."

The man stared.

"You mean — you dear violet woman — you *can't* mean that it is anything to you?"

"Yes, yes," Caroline said, the blood of her heart red in her face. "I know you could succeed, and I should like to help you. I'm not beautiful like a rose, but ——"

The man sprang up, a great light in his eyes; he laughed a little laugh of tender triumph that is of potent charm with women.

"It is," he said, as if awed by the marvelous, "it is. What am I that I should deserve this!"

"I could help," Caroline insisted, "I have money——"

"No."

He stood very tall and strong, his roughness dropped as a fustian garment. He unbuckled his armored belt and laid it on the ground.

"No, I will win, myself, and I will not touch your hand until I am worthy. The memory of your face and your name is all I ask."

He bent down and cut the rattles from the snake's tail and put them into his pocket.

"For luck," he said. Then a glistening strand of her hair upon his dark sleeve caught his eye, and he wound it around his finger and folded it in a bit of paper, which he carefully placed in an inner pocket. He did not say "For love," but his manner bore such accent, and Caroline watched with the tender smile of the woman who approves her wooing.

They parted without pledge or handclasp, but the man walked with resolute tread and the shoulders of the conqueror, and Caroline's step had the spring of hope. She was alive at last, to the finger-tips, and while she rejoiced in the possession of wings, she gave meed of gratitude to the gray wrappings that had held their luster untouched for this hour so strangely full.

"I'm glad, glad," she said repeatedly to herself, "that I never cared before. It couldn't be the same again — for a woman," she added, in generous concession to the portion given the rose girl, showing that the wisdom of women and the ages had descended in large measure upon Caroline.

The Green Hat-Pin.*

BY WALTER CHURCH.

IT was on a ranch in the Arkansas Ozarks. For hours I had lounged in a hammock, made of ripped gunnysack, suspended by rope and baling wire in the rustic summer house.

I had puzzled my brain to weariness, hoping for some inspiration, giving a clue to the mystery which had thrilled that quiet neighborhood since the day before.

Moreover, the heroine, Mary Griffith, was the fair Southern girl I had met on the *Queen*, coming up White River from Batesville to McBee Landing. At last I had looked into the eyes of which I had dreamed and had so vainly sought since early youth.

Then all serious thought fled, as I recalled an amusing interview with the "oldest inhabitant," on my way from the boat landing the day before.

He was sitting on a log near his too-much ventilated cabin, contentedly chewing tobacco and looking too lazy to smoke, which involved re-filling his pipe.

"Good morning!" I said, suavely, "May I get a drink of water?" looking towards the cool spring bubbling up under the cliff just outside his dilapidated door.

"Howdy! Thar's the Go'de — he'p yo'se'f."

"Oh, that was delicious!" I exclaimed, re-hanging the gourd on the peach tree limb. "My name is Kirk Lenoir; I'm going to visit the Judge at the ranch; may I ask your name?" I continued.

Hesitating a moment, he partly turned his face toward the open cabin door, and drawled — "Say, Deely, whut's the name of thet durned ole cuss yo' married down in Poke County 'bout fifty year ago?"

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The musical voice inside ceased droning, "Swing low, sweet char-i-ut, Gwine fur ter carry me home!" and hardened perceptibly as it shouted:

"See hyar, Scissor-Bill Sykes, whut yo' projeckin' 'bout now? Too durn lazy to 'member yo'r own name!" and the melodious refrain continued and ended with its pathetic falling inflection — "Gwine fur ter carry me home!"

The old man chuckled delightedly. "She sayin' ma name's Scissor-Bill Sykes, an' she ginerally know whut she tawkin' 'bout — yo' heer me!"

"How long have you lived in this country, Mr. Sykes?"

"Wall, I dunno 'zactly — when I fust come they wuz diggin' the channel fur White River and jest a-puttin' the bark on the trees!"

I stared at him incredulously, but his face looked as solemn as a plumed hearse waiting at your door.

"Any game around here?"

"Plenty onct — squir'ls an' rabbits — Snaiks done druv off whut they didn't eat."

"Are there really any snakes here large enough to swallow a rabbit?"

"Swally a rabbit! Huh! They's snaiks hyar big 'nough to swally down ten rabbits all rolled into one ole grandaddy rabbit!"

"How big and how long?" I asked incredulously.

"Oh, 'bout ez big 'round as yore laig — an' frum nineteen to 'leven foot long!" he asserted with anticlimatic assurance.

"Did you ever see any here that large?"

"Cain't say ez I hev — but Ole Si Yoakum did, fur he tole me so hisse'f, an' no longer than this mawnin I seed a track that big crossin' th' road jest below the Jedge's tater patch."

"Which way was it going?" I asked thoughtlessly.

The keen old eyes glanced at me swiftly, and seeing I was serious, he drawled solemnly:

"I didn't hev no spectacles on, an' you cain't tell fum they track which-er-way a snaik's goin' 'thout no spectacles."

I stretched back in the hammock and laughed aloud at the remembered stupidity of my own question, and the old sinner's sarcastic reply.

I was startled by a thin, piping voice from the other hammock in the porch nearby, but concealed by vines.

"Whut yo' laffin' at?"

"Snakes! Better be careful, or one might swallow you."

"Huph! I ain't afeerd o' no snaik!"

Just then, down in a shaded corner of the summer house, I saw something glitter like a greenish reptilian eye. I swung the hammock until I could pick it up — a long, steel hat-pin, with an irridescent opal head, which scintillated emerald rays as if it prisoned the soul of some ancient King Cobra.

Who could be the owner? Surely not the cook — the only woman on the place, and the mother of young Imp in that other hammock. Certainly she would not wear so costly a pin!

A small, sarcastic voice behind me exclaimed, "Whar them snaiks you laffin' at?" and then joyously, and imperatively, "Whar yo' git my swode? Gin it to me!"

"How came it yours, I'd like to know?"

"Cause I done foun' it yistiddy evenin' in the Bog Road, by the big snaik track!"

"Where? Come and show me!" I said, hastily rising, for I had not believed what Scissor-Bill Sykes had told me.

Sure enough, across the dusty road was a trail which might have been made by a log but for its graceful sinuosity and smooth continuity.

"Thar's the snaik track, and thar's my tracks whar I foun' my swode — gin it to me!"

Large as was the serpent trail, my thoughts were more interested in the slender foot-prints of a woman, so small they might have been made by a child, but for the high heels and a certain developed character. That dainty track could be made but by one woman in Arkansas. She had evidently dismounted to better examine that startling serpentine trail, and perhaps dropped the green hat-pin as she re-mounted.

"Who was the lady here?" I asked, pointing to the little shoe tracks.

"Dunno — I ain't seen no lady;" and Imp went on proudly brandishing his "swode," and then fiercely thrusting at numerous but invisible foes.

I wondered how she had re-mounted, for the foot-prints did not leave the dusty road. "Must have been a pony," I thought, "But no — the horse tracks are too large and the stride too long. How the deuce did she mount without assistance? Ah, there is where her horse knelt, so she could spring into the saddle. I might expect something unusual from such a girl!"

"What will you take for the hat-pin, Imp?"

"Thirty-five cent?" tentatively answered Imp, doubtless considering a ticket to the coming circus, with a glass of pink lemonade and a paper of "goober peas," the native name for peanuts.

He was quite chagrined when I promptly took the pin from his hand and replaced it with a quarter and two nickels; disappointed, perhaps, because he had not secured another glass of lemonade. This supposition was confirmed by his delight when I silently handed him a third nickel, and he scampered away to "tell Maw!"

I wondered if that snake were the lordly thief who had so often robbed the hen-roost in the small trees near the stable, where the ground was too rocky to leave a trail. During the unexpected absence of my genial host, Imp had been my chief entertainer. He had told me of chickens squawking in the night, and of the sudden slinking return of the two dogs who had valiantly rushed out to the rescue.

Imp had also disjointedly told me of the haunted parlor at the Griffiths', and how "Miss Mary done bin hoo-dooed," which tale of wonder I afterward heard from the fair Mary herself.

It seemed that when she returned home, her first pleasure was to air and dust the partly dismantled and long-closed parlor. After opening both doors and all the windows, she was recalled for some time to the kitchen, and did not know that the cook's children had been playing "orfen asylum" on the parlor sofa, with Spot's new litter of puppies, before they ran out to see the brood of fluffy yellow ducklings just hatched by their old dominecker hen mother. But there the puppies were, fast asleep — at least, they were quiet, and their first nine days' blindness unended. She admired the beragged and be-ribboned small, soft bundles of fur, some of whose abnormally large paws sprawled around over the cool, black hair-cloth, as tiny, petulant cries of drowsy hunger began to be emitted.

She had not believed there were really nine, for Spot was such

a small, unpretentious mother. But the seemingly impossible had been achieved. The children had left them in two groups of four at either end of the sofa, with the probably disputed ninth alone in the center.

Preparing to sweep, she softly rolled the sofa in front of the large, open fireplace, thickly screened with cedar boughs, which she intended to "liven up" by adding gossamer asparagus greens with their scarlet berries, and she smiled to think how cheerful it would look.

Stopping a moment to get her feather brush from the sofa, she picked up the lonely little black puppy and held it tenderly to her cheek. This made the little chap whimper for "dinner" louder than ever.

While dusting the bric-à-brac stand behind the door opening from the front hall, she was startled by a terrified "*mi-au-ow!*" coming from the sofa, and she saw a white kitten in place of the black puppy, which had mysteriously disappeared.

She doubted the evidence of her own senses, till she took it in her hands, and looked into its blue, confiding eyes.

But the puppy? She knew she would have heard it if it had fallen from the sofa on to that uncarpeted floor. Yet she hastily looked all around for it, even under the sofa, which she thought of moving to search the fireplace, but remembered the cedar boughs thickly standing on the hearth. Replacing the kitten on the sofa, she ran out into the hall, through the front door into the yard and over to the smoke-house where both children were watching the young ducks paddling around in the water trough, to the great distress of their hysteric mother, whose warning clucks were serenely ignored.

"Where is the other puppy? Did either of you children take it?" she inquired breathlessly.

Their blank amazement was sufficient answer. "Is one gone? Which one?" they asked, with prompt accord.

She told them about it, and they hurried back together, the children more interested in the new-found kitten than in the lost puppy.

Little Nellie rushed in ahead, and was just taking the kitten from the sofa as Mary entered the parlor door.

"But you said it was a white one, with blue eyes, and it's not at all!" exclaimed the half-tearful Nellie. "It's as black as the puppy neither of us would have!"

Mary Griffith almost fainted when she saw that the kitten had not a white spot left on it, except the little star in its forehead, and even its eyes had changed from that heavenly blue to a yellowish cat-gray.

Was she, or the kitten, bewitched? Had that black puppy really changed to a white kitten, and then within five minutes become black again, on its way back to puppyhood? Of course, that was absurd. She was too astonished to try to explain to the disappointed Nellie, but merely said, "Why, it is black, isn't it? I must have been dreaming to think it was white."

Just then a slamming door, — the second one she had heard, caused her to tell the children to take their pets to the sitting room, while she hurriedly closed and locked the parlor windows and doors against the coming storm.

When she reached the sitting room, Jack had completed a trade with Nellie, by which he became sole owner of all the puppies and Nellie the delighted mistress of the strange kitten, which Mary Griffith could not help *believing* had so suddenly changed its color, though she *knew*, of course, it had done nothing of the kind.

The proud little foster-mother brought the kitten to Mary, who made some hasty excuse and left the room. She couldn't bear to touch it again — "the horrid changeling!" She told me that her father's Scotch-Irish superstition must have been suddenly developed in her by this uncanny mystery.

The more I thought of these incongruous facts, the more troubled I became. Was that winsome lassie suffering from dementia? Was it possible that any strain of insanity clouded so bright an intellect, so lovely a soul? The very idea made me heartsick, and I rejected it with scorn of myself for even asking such a question.

I had stuck the green hat-pin through the soft crown of my own "Fedora" which lay upon the floor of the summer house, where I could see it as I was stretched out luxuriously in the hammock.

To this day I cannot say surely that I was not dreaming when I thought I saw three or four snakes coiling near the hat-pin, gazing half-charmed, half-terrified, at the fiery green rays it emitted.

When I sat up and rubbed my eyes to see if I was awake, no reptiles were visible, but I was quite certain I heard rustling in the grass and weeds outside the latticed and vined summer house.

That afternoon, I called on Mary Griffith. She was pale and nervous, but evidently wished to be entertaining, for during that romantic boat ride we had become good friends.

"Oh, Mr. Kirk, I have had bad luck ever since that absurd puppy and kitten episode yesterday morning, and in the afternoon I lost my beautiful opal hat-pin which Uncle Iswara, my mother's brother, brought me from India. He told me at the Fair in St. Louis, that he bought the stone of a 'fakir' in the Himalayas, a snake charmer, who said it had been stolen from the eye of an idol; that it was 'bewitched,' or whatever they call it in India, and that it possessed some occult, irresistible power over serpents. Of course, I do not believe that, but I did hate to lose the opal all the same. And why Uncle Iswara should have had it set in the head of a hat-pin I cannot imagine."

"Possibly as a weapon of defence against the serpents," I said, smiling at the thought of Imp and his "swode."

Mary Griffith smiled placidly and politely. "But do you know, Mr. Kirk, sometimes even wearing it in my hat makes me feel awfully queer. I can't describe the sensation, except it is as I imagine I should feel if some monstrous serpent were trying to charm me with its dreadful, fiery eyes. It is a horrible, yet a fascinating feeling. Another thing, Uncle Iswara said the fakir claimed that that opal would bring its wearer either very good luck or very bad luck, according as the stars decreed. Just fancy! I did not wear it on the boat, — it was in my trunk."

Knowing I had her hat-pin, I do not understand what kept me from telling her at once.

"But the strangest thing of all, Mr. Kirk, happened yesterday afternoon. I came down ready to go horseback riding, hoping I might forget that miserable puppy and kitten, who were beginning to get on my nerves. I had a strange longing to unlock the parlor and play on the piano. As soon as I touched the keys, I found myself either improvising or reproducing from long-sleeping memory some weird, chant-like tune, which I seemed to have known and forgotten ages ago. I had not finished it before I was seized with

some inexplicable apprehension, that same 'charmed' feeling. I ran out of the parlor and locked the door, without stopping even to close the piano. How I would have enjoyed that delicious ride in the cooling evening, had I not lost my precious hat-pin. And, oh, Mr. Kirk, I saw the largest snake track — right in the road below the Judge's garden!"

For some unknown reason, she blushed furiously as she said this, and seemed to be getting very nervous. To distract her attention from herself, I asked, "Could you play that 'Cobra Dance' again?" Almost unconsciously, I had given her improvised or remembered chant a name. "I should so much like to hear it once more," I added absently.

"I will try," and taking her seat at the piano, an old-fashioned, spindle-legged, carved and decorated specimen, she began a wild, barbaric, yet solemn movement, which stirred me strangely, as it seemed to waken ancient memories. I could almost fancy myself turbaned and sitting on a mat, while hooded cobras wreathed themselves around me, or went through undulating dances at my bidding. And Mary too — no, that was not her name — yet it was *she* in picturesque garb, fluting on reed pipes the very chant that was thrilling me again.

I was roused from my fiercely-sweet reverie by a rustle in the fireplace, and horrified to see, protruding through the browning cedar boughs, the head of a monstrous serpent. The staring eyes were intent, not upon her, or me, but fixed upon the opal pin sticking in my hat which lay on the floor by the sofa, in a patch of sunlight from the west window.

Appalled at first, my next impulse was to draw my revolver and shoot it. But the shock to Mary! Cooler judgment prevailed. Stepping softly to her side, I whispered, "Who is that out in the yard? Come with me and see." Taking her firmly by the arm, I led her through the side door, which I softly closed behind us, before she realized what had happened. Her own music had thrown her into a dream-like half-trance.

Then I took her hand, and looking her straight in the eye, whispered, "Do not be alarmed, I am just going to kill a snake which was charmed by your lovely music."

Stepping to the open window, I saw the serpent's head nearly

across the room, yet its huge body seemed not half out from the fireplace. Graceful, spotted, banded and terrible, it slowly undulated across the bare floor, its head lifted as if to strike at the beautiful, baleful lightning flashed from the opal.

I fired point blank at its blazing eye. With open, hissing jaw, and darting, forked tongue, it reared nearly to the ceiling. Then the writhing convolutions of coils rapidly unrolled from the fireplace, and the troubled mass was still, except for a few spasmodic strikes of the vibrating tail.

When I realized the situation, I had taken Mary's shivering form into my arms, and her head was on my breast. She whispered, "I thought I was playing the 'Cobra Dance' for you, just as of old." The story we had learned ages ago did not need the passionate words which renewed its glory, as we sat together on the bench in the porch.

Then I brought her hat-pin, and told how it was found.

As I dragged the dead serpent out under the trees, Mary exclaimed, "Poor little kitten and puppy!" for she now realized the horrid cause of their disappearance.

Together we went up the back stairs at the end of the porch, into a little-used garret, and looked around, till we found the old mother cat who had been prevented by the storm-slammed door from carrying her other kittens down to the parlor sofa. I went with Mary around to the north side of the house, and found that the large rock was out of the hole in the chimney through which ashes were drawn from the parlor fireplace into the ash-shed, where they were preserved for lye-making.

It was clear that the big snake had easy access to that cool summer den, to which it had been first attracted, perhaps, by the young chimney swallows falling from their nests to the hearth.

Mary Griffith looked at me with shining eyes, from which all uncanny shadows had fled. But she did kiss the green hat-pin, and softly whisper, as she placed her hand in mine, "The good luck has come!"

The Wailing Willow.*

BY JANE PRATT.

"FOR my part, I feel as if I had been drawn through a knot-hole," announced Lydia Hitchcock.

She was standing in the doorway of the southwest chamber, and the light from the little hand-lamp she held showed her narrow, dark, face, stiff and drawn.

"From a child I always did hate a wind," she continued, "and this one no sooner dies down than it starts up again. And hear that rain. Ugh!"

"But it's the willow that's the worst," responded a gentle voice from the depths of a colossal, high-backed, flaring-sided chair before the fire on the hearth. "I think that willow is possessed, Lydia. It lashes itself against the panes, and it wails and shrieks as if it were a soul in agony. It never used to be there in Uncle Seth's time. I wonder who planted it, and so near the house, too."

"A soul in agony," repeated Lydia, shooting a quick, frightened look at the broad, old-fashioned window against which the willow tapped and scraped, "Yes, it does sound like that. Why, there's the Jones boy, and I must go and tell him I shan't want so much milk next week."

The rapid departure of Lydia with the hand-lamp left the large, square, white room dim; but the flickering fire on the hearth made a brightness near to it, and showed a little lady in a white dressing-gown, very thin and frail, in the great chair, and a young, vigorous woman on a foot-stool near her.

"Not so much milk next week! Oh, Sister mine, the tragedy of it! Next week Lydia will be drinking her tea alone — and where shall we be then, poor things? You will be in the flat and I shall be on the Elevated. The Elevated! Oh, pity us, I had

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forgotten there was an Elevated. 'Move up forward there, please move up forward. Plenty of room in the front of the car.' Plenty of room in the front of the car! It breaks my heart to think of it. And the children at school. Fifty of them. Fifty! 'Good morning, children!' 'Good morning, Miss Douglas.' 'Position!' 'I want to see Jimmy Murphy in position!' Oh, when I call to mind my pleasant voice, that deadly pleasant voice of mine all the time, it makes me sick, actually sick. And you alone so much in that little bandbox of a flat, why, I believe we could put all of it into this room ——"

The rain drove harder against the windows and the willow branches swooped against the glass. The flame leaping up, as if in answer, showed the invalid shuddering and pressing her hands against her temples.

The girl's tone changed instantly. "Why, you poor dear, you don't like it, you don't like the storm a bit, do you? It has beaten you down and flattened you out just like Lydia's white asters. We'll have a light and another stick of wood, and you'll feel better."

This younger sister had warmish, cheerful brown hair, a nice color under her skin, a dimple in one cheek, lithe, vigorous movements. She looked like a sort of embodiment of light, and warmth, and comfort as she lit the shaded lamp, pulled down the shades, and stirred up the fire.

"Lisa, I believe you need a little Tarragona wine, and just one water-thin, if you *have* had supper, and I won't bother you any more with my laments. . . . But I have had such an awfully good time here this summer. I haven't had such a good time since we were little girls and used to come to see Uncle Seth and Aunt Caroline in this very house. But now, you know, that all the summer people are going, I want to stay just as much. Oh, wouldn't it be lovely if the house were ours and we could live here and be cozy this winter and right along? It seems as if I wouldn't ask for another thing. Really, I can't help thinking it was queer Uncle Seth didn't leave the house to his own very especial great nieces instead of to adopted daughter Lydia — when he left her all his money, too!"

Elizabeth Douglas put her glass down to look at Evelyn in a

way she had. Since when had the girl's tastes grown so quiet? But Evelyn did not notice the look. Instead she said:

"Lisa, the only thing I mind about that willow is the way it taps against the pane. It's as bad as spirit rappings. It makes me feel quite spooky."

Just then the front door bell rang.

"Who can be out such a night as this?" queried the elder sister, sipping her wine comfortably now.

"The Doctor," came in ready answer to the question from Lydia with her lamp at the door.

"The Doctor! But he was here this morning," exclaimed Miss Douglas, with an invalid's quick egotism.

"And he says he would like to see Miss Evelyn," continued Miss Lydia, the ghost of a smile hiding away somewhere in her eyes or around the corners of her mouth.

Miss Evelyn was at the mirror, giving her hair a few pats and pulls, and down-stairs in a minute.

"It seems real natural to have the Doctor coming to the house again," said Lydia, setting the little lamp on the mantel-piece, but standing as usual. "Uncle and Aunt used to set a store by him, and it was always pleasant to have him come in. But I never saw him look so young and sort of full of the matter as he does tonight. And, come to think of it, he *is* young. But he's had a kind of lonely life."

Evelyn ran in, dimpling and radiant.

"Oh, Lisa, the rain is so becoming to the Doctor, and what do you suppose the silly man has come for? Miss Trumbull and Miss Parker are going to have their evening in the studio just the same, and Mr. Schiller is going to play, and all our summer crowd is to be there; it is a kind of farewell to me, and the Doctor has come to get me, and he promised Miss Trumbull to bring me back at all costs, he says — and so I have come up to dress for the party — put on all my old clothes, you know."

"Well," interjected Miss Lydia, "you can wear a pretty waist, anyway." After which remark, frivolous as to words, but most magisterial as to manner, she took up her lamp and disappeared.

In the next room Evelyn was opening closet doors and pulling out drawers.

"Oh, Lisa, there isn't the least danger!" — "Yes, I'm putting on my high boots." — "No, my short green." — "Oh, but they have a big fire in their old fireplace to dry off all the dampness." — "Dark as a pocket, but the Doctor knows every step of the way, and you must confess he *does* take care of one." — "Yes, but I'll slip my tam all over my hair, and nobody will mind if it is blown about anyway." — "Is my rain-coat in your closet?" — "Oh, yes, I remember."

A little subdued in this enveloping grayness, she bent over her sister.

"Now, you won't be lonely? You feel all comfortable? Go right on with the story; I'll read up by myself. And whatever you do, don't sit up for me."

Then she was gone.

. . . . . .

It was young Keller and his guitar, the guitar which had marked time for every hay-ride and picnic and evening around the fire all summer. Young Keller was going back to Harvard tomorrow himself for a little extra tutoring before the term began, and so his summer was over, too. He might make a joke of it, and throw himself in an attitude of despair at Evelyn Douglas's feet while he enlivened the occasion by mournful ditties in a somewhat uncertain voice; but to tell the truth, his honest heart did ache, and he was almost as sorry to go away as Evelyn herself.

"Oh, Mr. Keller, you move us to tears," came a voice from somewhere.

Half the people sitting around the great fireplace of the studio were going away soon. They were roasting apples tonight, instead of marshmallows. There were huge platters on the tables, heaped high with grapes, and the heavy beams of the studio were decorated with yellow ears of corn and with grotesquely cut pumpkins. The rain beating steadily outside, interrupted by gusts of driving wind, made this interior all the sweeter and dearer. So the Doctor thought as he looked at Evelyn in the ingleside, and so Evelyn thought as she looked into the fire.

And then it was her turn to tell a story.

"It isn't at all wonderful," she began, "like the other things that have been told tonight. It is just a very vivid dream I had

a week or two ago, and Mr. Keller's doleful willow and Miss Trumbull's picture of the woman at the door made me think of it."

The Doctor gave an almost imperceptible start. The picture of the woman at the door had been before his eyes a great deal of late. Just a young girl standing before a closed door, but it had seemed to possess a magic power of sending him off into long reveries about a door before which he stood, waiting, waiting.

But Evelyn was speaking.

"I thought I had come here just as we used to, and had gone to Uncle Seth's house, where we are staying now, you know, and I was so happy at the thought of Uncle Seth and Aunt Caroline coming out to welcome me, just as they always did. But when I got to the house it seemed to be night, and there were no lights inside, and it was dark and raining outside, and nobody came to the door, and I was alone, waiting, just like the woman in the picture. And partly I was myself just as I am now, but partly I was a little girl, just as I used to be when I came to visit Uncle and Aunt."

Evelyn had a rich, full, low voice, and it took on an indescribable pathos. She was looking into the fire, but the Doctor had a queer feeling that she was speaking wholly to him. As to young Keller, still on the floor, he leaned his head against the settle, and his feelings were quite beyond his powers of analysis.

"But suddenly there came a thought from somewhere, like a voice, like my uncle speaking to me, or like the help which is always appearing in fairy stories, and it said, 'Ask the Willow Lady.' Immediately, you know how things change in dreams, I looked out into the south yard, and I saw the willow which is growing there now — it never was there when my uncle was living — the storm was over, and the moon was shining very brightly and making the willow all silver. It seemed to quiver and shake in the moonlight, though there was no wind, and, as I looked, its dim outlines seemed to change into the form of a great, stately lady wrapped in a cloak, and she began to walk toward me, and as she came nearer I saw that she had a key in her hand. She gave it to me, and I put it in the keyhole and it turned in the lock. Just then there seemed to be a light in the house, and I heard Aunt

Caroline's voice saying, 'Why, you dear child,' — and then I awoke."

That was the last of the story telling, and soon the lanterns were bobbing through the darkness, as Miss Trumbull's guests found their way home. The Hitchcock house was farther down the Lane, and the Doctor and Evelyn had separated themselves from the clustering lanterns at the porch of the studio, and went their way together. There was a lull in the storm, but only that. No willows stood silver in the moonlight.

But the Hitchcock house, instead of being dark, as it had been in the dream, was surprisingly light. There was a bright light upstairs, one in the front hall, and one in the kitchen.

The minute they stepped on the front steps, Miss Lydia opened the door. Her face was gray, and she looked ten years older than she had looked when they left her.

"Oh," she said to the Doctor, "I'm glad to see you." To Evelyn, "Your sister is awful sick."

The next hour seemed to Evelyn afterwards an enormous space of time, in which she was not at all herself, but somebody else filling a part, doing just what she was told to do. At the end of it Lisa lay quiet, exhausted, but out of pain, and saved for the time at least. A serious heart trouble had at last shown itself unmistakably, but the girl did not understand that yet; she only knew that her sister was better, and would be still better tomorrow.

The Doctor held her hand a minute at the door, and looked searchingly at her.

"You will go to bed now," he said. "She will sleep until late in the morning." Then he looked out. "See, the storm is over, and the clouds are clearing away fast."

"The storm?" said Evelyn, "I had forgotten."

"It has been blowing a perfect gale almost all the time I have been here. I am afraid we must have lost some of the old elms. Miss Lydia," he added, turning to the old woman — she looked an old woman tonight — "you must get Miss Evelyn to bed and make her as comfortable as you can. She has had a hard night."

However, when the door was shut, and he was gone, Miss Lydia made no effort to do anything. She stood and looked at the pale girl and began to speak in an even, unemotional voice.

"If you think you can sit up a little longer," the words dropped clear and cold, "I should like to tell you something."

"Why, of course," responded Evelyn, sitting down on the sofa in the front entry.

"I expect you'll think it's dreadful wicked, but I'm going to tell you just as it is."

"Why, yes, of course," said Evelyn, "just as it is."

Her sister was better, she kept saying over to herself, the Doctor had said her sister was better, surely Lydia could not be going to tell her that she was not better.

"You know your Uncle Seth and Aunt Caroline took me from the Poor Farm and brought me up and adopted me and gave me their name, and I'm their own child in the eyes of the law."

Lydia was standing before her. It was always so hard to make her sit down. Was she going crazy? Evelyn wished that somehow she could call the Doctor back. But it was quite true, what she said, and she was going on clearly enough.

"I suppose you understood that that was the reason everything came to me when they died, because there was no will found, and I was their only child in the eyes of the law. And this was the only home I had ever known, and how could I ever live anywhere else?"

Her eyes were pitifully pleading, her face was drawn and old. Evelyn felt her queer pre-occupation and insensibility melting into a great tenderness for the lonely woman.

"Oh, Lydia, dear, do sit down; you never rest. Sit down, there is no hurry, I can't go to bed. If there is anything you want to tell me, sit down and let us talk it over. But first I will slip up-stairs and make sure that Lisa is all right."

"She is sleeping so peacefully and breathing so regularly and quietly. Now we have all the time we need."

"It won't take much time," snapped Lydia Hitchcock, hardened to stone again, bracing herself rigidly in the corner of the sofa. "Your great-uncle did make a will, and I knew where it was. It gave your sister and you the house and the meadow land, and me his railroad stock. I took it, and I put it in the cake-box that your sister Elizabeth gave me the Christmas before he died, and I dug a great hole and buried it in the ground, and I planted a willow twig over it. I never knew anything grow as that willow

twig did. It was an uncommon rainy season that first year, and the south yard is kind of low and damp. It was nearer the house than I ought to have put it, and in three or four years it got so it could reach to the windows. And the way that willow has talked, rainy weather and windy! It seemed to me it would drive me mad, it seemed to me everybody would know what it was saying. And yet I was so afraid of it, I couldn't have touched it or cut it down, or had it cut down — I wouldn't have dared. When your sister asked me once why I didn't I almost ran out of the room, I was so afraid she would ask me again.

"But, no matter how bad I felt, I kept saying to myself, 'Well, it serves you right. You've played a mighty mean trick, and it serves you right if you do feel bad.' I felt as if it made the house more mine, as if I were earning it by my sufferings, and sometimes when I sat down in the dining room of an afternoon and thought how pleasant the sun came in there I was real glad to suffer. It was worth while. But even then I could never quite face it that I had taken the cake-box your sister gave me for a Christmas present.

"And when she chose that room, where she could hear the willow every time it scraped, and when it began to trouble her just as it had troubled me, poor little delicate thing, with no strength to stand it, ——"

Lydia was beginning to tremble, the tears suddenly welled up in the hard, old eyes.

"It was more than I could stand," she continued passionately. I saw why she wasn't improving, I saw what was wearing on her. I used to say every night, 'Lord, take your old house, I don't want your old house. Take your old house, and show me up a thief and a liar, a regular church member like me, if it's any comfort to you.' I used to say that every night, but somehow in the morning my lips was locked tight and I couldn't open them any more than if they had been iron.

"But tonight it was awful! It was awful! Oh, she had been in that dreadful pain it seemed an age before you came. I didn't dare leave her. I thought she would certainly die every minute. I felt sure I had killed her. I knew it was that willow that had made her so sick."

She buried her face in her hands and wept, but in her weeping there was not only grief, there was thankfulness that Elizabeth was still alive, there was relief that at last her lips were unsealed.

When Evelyn thought of that terrible night afterwards she was surprised to remember that she had never for a moment set herself up for a judge of Lydia's conduct, or felt a second's anger against her. And when the exhausted woman's sobs ceased she found herself occupied only with the thought, how could this matter be arranged without publicity, so as to avoid neighborhood disgrace for old Seth Hitchcock's adopted daughter.

But everything must wait until morning, and Evelyn made an attempt to sleep, while Lydia spent the rest of the night in the high-backed chair beside Elizabeth's bedside.

The sunrise found the two watchers tip-toeing into the kitchen, and before long they were making a rather forlorn attempt at breakfast. Lydia seemed a good deal broken.

"Of course you will always live here with us," said Evelyn. "I know Lisa will insist on it."

"Do you think it would be best to tell her all about it?" begged Lydia. "What always rankled most of all with me was that I could be so mean as to take the cake-box she gave me Christmas."

But now Evelyn was beginning to feel more like her every-day self, and her dimple almost showed itself as she promised, with fervor, "I'll never mention the cake-box. She shall never hear a word about the cake-box."

And just then the Doctor walked in with the cake-box.

"Did you know your willow was blown down?" he asked. "The water gullied under it, and what do you suppose I found?"

"Something," answered Evelyn, "that Miss Lydia lost very mysteriously several years ago," and she took it out of his hands and walked up-stairs with it.

The Doctor's eyes followed her wistfully. Was that closed door ever to be opened to him? But he said nothing, and went up very quietly to look at his patient.

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